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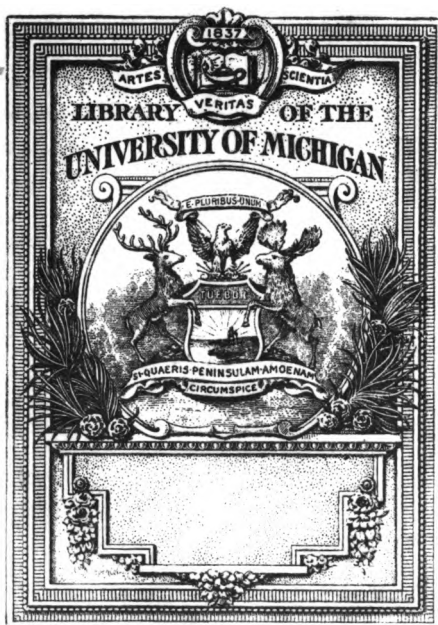
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# From the Cup of Silence

Helen Huntington



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# FROM THE CUP OF SILENCE

AND OTHER POEMS

BY

HELEN HUNTINGTON



G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS  
NEW YORK AND LONDON  
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## **FROM THE CUP OF SILENCE**



## FROM THE CUP OF SILENCE

**I** DRINK from the cup of silence  
And my long-parched soul revives  
Till I 'm free from the strain of living,  
The pressure of other lives.  
They fade, the forgotten voices,  
They die, the tormenting fires,  
And alone in an exaltation  
Rise the raptures of old desires.

In silence as keen as perfume,  
In silence deep as prayer,  
The old-time dreams come thronging  
Like swallows that wheel in air.

On waves of silence I 'm lifted  
To uttermost heavens of sound,  
I am clothed in robes of purple,  
With gold and jasper crowned.

The thoughts that dissolved like vapour  
Take form and shining hue,  
The nameless joy that thrilled me  
No more is strange and new;  
I come to my own possession,  
The world's shrill doubts are past,  
For the dream was truth foreboded,  
And I know my own at last.

## THE CITY

**I**RON and steel, immense, uncouth,  
resistless,

Here is the Town!

Labour and traffic rule it, wealth and  
commerce

Weave its renown.

Mighty in power, deformed, unlovely,  
sordid,

Soulless it seems.

Come, O ye poets, artists, seers of visions,  
Deck it with dreams!

Crown it with rainbow images and  
wonder,  
With the magic of art,  
Fruit of your brain and flower of all your  
fancy,  
Spoil of your heart.

Fling o'er its towers fantastic clouds of  
legend,  
And wild desires.  
Let it stand in the dawn and sunset, vast,  
triumphant,  
'Mid opal fires,

Till it glows in the thoughts of men a  
thing of wonder,  
Queen of its own,  
Girt with its shining rivers, splendid,  
sword-like,  
Venice outgrown!

## TO FIRE

**O** FIRE, thou free one!  
Thou god unspoiled!

Attaining swiftly

Where man has toiled,

Thy formless glory

No mind may see,

Nor brooding fathom

Thy mystery!

Destroyer, Father,

Creator, King,

Thy raging beauty,

A living thing,

In desolation,  
Bright wings unfurled,  
Thy barren pathway  
Lies round the world!

All foul corruptions  
Thou makest clean,  
In flame they vanish  
To space unseen;  
The shames of nature,  
The taints of earth,  
By thee transfigured  
Know airy birth.

O force supernal!  
O rose of heat!  
Incarnate beauty,  
Unrest complete!  
Remote from knowledge,  
Defying sense,

Ah, whither speedest ?  
And comest—whence ?

More strange than jewels,  
More fierce than hate,  
Consummate wonder,  
Thy flames create.  
O perfect passion,  
O great desire,  
I, bowed, salute thee,  
Resistless Fire!

## THE BRIDES

**W**ITHIN this formal garden plot,  
White flowers may grow alone,  
'T is like a chapel, privet-walled,  
Where bees the rites intone.

And through the calm, secluded spot,  
By sun and moon-lit hours,  
They pass, in meek unconscious grace,  
Processions of the flowers.

Like brides in dress of snowy white,  
All virginal and fair,  
They come to wed the summer days,  
'Mid incense-breathing air.

The child-like crocus of the Spring  
Tells here her marriage vows,  
And here the pallid hyacinth  
In fragrant beauty bows.

Each day proclaims its choice most fair,  
For one would wed the rose,  
And one the shy anemone,  
The frailest flower that grows.

And so the candid brides appear  
And charm their fleeting while,  
Till Autumn sweeps the chapel bare,  
With empty, wind-blown aisle.

## THE WAYFARER

**I** WILL reach far down in the pit of  
sorrow

And gather song,  
With the bitter past I will deck to-morrow.

I will turn no cowardly look behind me,  
But still fare on  
Till the glow of ultimate joy shall blind  
me.

For I ask no blessing and no forgiving,  
The gain was mine,  
Since I learn from all things the truth of  
living.

## WOMEN POETS

**F**AME was our dream.  
We let them slip by—  
Beauty and youth—  
You, queen in truth,  
Azure of eye,  
Hair all agleam.

When we were gone,  
Long should our names  
(So we opined)  
Still linger on,  
Beacon like flames  
Of glory divined.

Alas, for the years!  
My name is forgot,  
Though some sing my songs.  
Yours, it appears,  
Are as if they were not,  
To you fame belongs

For beauty of face.  
We died to our own,  
You in your verse;  
I, in my place,  
Am nameless, unknown,  
Forgotten or worse.

Which were the best—  
Live on, as a queen  
Of beauty, by right,  
And lose all the rest?  
Or, as my fate has been,  
To vanish from sight,

Known in my verse  
But forever ignored?—  
When living is past  
Thus we rehearse  
The fame we implored,—  
Its fruit at the last.

## SURRENDER

**O**N the hearth, when the flames leap  
higher,  
I crouch in my lone desire,  
As the warmth and glow  
Is your love I know,  
For your love is the living fire.

If I open the window wide  
To the breath of the cold outside,  
As the purer air  
In my chamber there,  
So your words in my soul abide.

**You are my cold and heat,  
The earth that is 'neath my feet,  
You my dreams possess,  
And my wakefulness,  
And the pulse of my heart complete.**

**You are the good that cures,  
The evil that still endures,  
Beyond your thought  
My life is naught,  
You have made it forever yours.**

## THE UNBEAUTIFUL

**A** H! the eyes that are weeping,  
That dreary vigil are keeping,—  
The eyes no lover's rhymes confess  
(Dull eyes, or small, expressionless),  
The eyes that watch through their sordid  
day  
While beauty goes her triumphant way!

Ah! the hearts that are aching,  
The little hearts that are breaking,—  
In women's bodies manifold  
(Unwieldy, shapeless, worn, or old),  
The hearts that silently break each day  
While beauty goes her triumphant way!

## STARVATION

**I** COULD not live by the heart  
Though Love said try,  
I could not live by the mind,—  
’T were but to die,—  
O God! I must live by the soul,  
Is there no reply?

## SNOW IN MAY

**I** HAVE vanquished the law of the  
hours,

And broken the bars of Spring,  
White I come to the whiter flowers,  
And a word from the clouds I bring.

To die on a hyacinth's breast,  
And quench my longing there,  
Untimely storm has heard my behest,  
I have conquered the paths of air.

Softer than wing of the moth,  
Deeper than kiss of the bee,  
I touch thy petals in lover's troth,  
And I bury myself in thee.

## THE LOVE OF THE MIRROR

**B**ELOVED, you scorn me now where  
    once you praised,  
You blame the glass, because, unlike the  
    sea,  
It changes with the changefulness of man.  
And yet my pain will still outdistance  
    yours,  
As years outlive the days or stars the  
    snow;  
For mine it is to know all light and shade,  
All beauty, wonder, love, and warm  
    desire,  
And never once to hold or make my own.

O face I loved, that lived within my  
heart!

O Love, whose passion found a twin in  
mine!

You were but faithless, leaving me alone,  
It was not I that changed—but you that  
passed.

## **FREEDOM**

**O**VER the sordid, vulgar city  
Circle the wild sea-birds,  
So into my heart, in wrath and pity,  
Flutter your love-winged words.

Breathing of wide and wind-swept spaces,  
Freedom and joy and strength,  
The rapture and peace of lonely places  
They show to my soul at length.

Now I awake to white emotion,  
My innermost faith is true,  
The way is wide as the tracks of ocean  
And the old gives place to the new.

## ARTISTS

**H**E loves her well—but speech is cold,  
And fate grants neither place nor  
time,

Light loves alone are overbold,—  
And so he writes his heart in rhyme.

She loves him—ah! if it were so!  
For loveless days are dark and long,  
Once, only once, he seemed to know,—  
'T was when she sang her heart in song.

## THE IMMORTAL

**"LOVE is gone!" we exclaimed, "and  
its place is the grave,  
And our lives are the mourners, in  
tears  
For the exquisite pain that remembering  
gave,  
For the future oblivious years."**

**But Love from its tomb irresistibly rose,  
It was I and my lover that died,  
Each to each we are lost till the centuries  
close,  
But the love that was ours shall abide.**

## WAITING

**I** SIT in the hush of twilight, waiting,  
waiting,

For the sound of a stranger song,  
Will it come with a breath of April's  
month of mating,

When the dusk of the day grows long?  
Will it come with the scent of flowers and  
grass upspringing?

With a flutter of birds on wing?  
What song, oh, what song is time and  
twilight bringing,  
Is it youth, is it love, or Spring?

## TO SNOW

**S**TRANGE divinity of snow,  
Eager other worlds to know,  
Spotless spirit, not of earth,  
What wild power invoked thy birth?

Wind-blown from the clouds on high,  
Alien from the brooding sky,  
Thou descendest, silent, free,  
Visitant of mystery.

Thou hast known, untouched by bliss,  
Radiant dawns with rose-flushed kiss.  
Passion of the moons that waned  
Left thee pallid but unstained.

From the naked trees downcast,  
Stirred within the icy blast,  
Subtile shadows, fair, untrue,  
Woo thee with ethereal blue.

All the stars to thee have told  
Raptures of eternal cold,  
All the silent, ice-bound streams  
Made thee keeper of their dreams.

Phantom victor over all,  
Robed in white, transplendent pall,  
Mighty in thy shining power,  
Dazzling vision of an hour,

None thy mystery may know,  
As thou camest thou must go,—  
Fading god, by earth outworn,  
So, in mist, to heaven upborne.

## SONG

**Y**OUR love is wine to thirsting soul,  
Is heat to frozen veins,  
My life is but a deep-drained bowl  
Where only love remains.  
The rosy dawn is now outdone,  
The starlit eve forsworn,  
Arises now a greater sun,  
And newer stars are born.

The night is far too sweet for sleep,  
The day a vigil seems;  
Not less I know, in rapture deep,  
The sovereignty of dreams.

**My soul to sordid earth is lost,  
And, clothed with wings of fire,  
It finds new worlds, all flame and frost,  
All wonder and desire.**

## PLAYFELLOWS

**A** PLEASANT playfellow—the Mind!  
For ev'ry hour new games he'll  
find,

Invents a hundred puzzles rare  
To dissipate the weight of care;  
He's full of whimsies, first and last,  
Shows glowing pictures of the past,  
Considers life with nought of pain,  
And counts experience but gain.

Give me, as playfellow, the Mind!—  
Who but for laughter looks behind,  
And speeds contentedly the time  
With art, philosophy or rhyme.

The Heart, as playfellow, I 've heard  
Is moody, strange, too lightly stirred,  
In May is sighing for September,  
And whispers, night and day: "Re-  
member!"

## CELIA

**H**ER fate to her was all surprise.  
She faced her tragic destiny  
With puzzled and pathetic eyes,—  
A butterfly blown out to sea!

## THE MUSICIAN

**A**N idle interest the faces showed,  
And weary patience for a fleeting  
while,  
Then civil coldness turned to mocking  
smile,  
While still the grave Andante onward  
flowed.

At last, like water trickling through a  
chink  
In some ornately decorated bowl,  
One after one, no more beneath control,  
The hearers fled—half shame-faced one  
might think!

But I, in truth, see not the emptying hall,  
I play my soul's creation, born with  
    woe,  
The audience entire may rise and go,—  
To him who plays its consequence is  
    small.

I hear not what I play, but that far  
    strain  
Which touched my fancy with creative  
    fire,  
I taste not of achievement, but desire,  
And know the Vision's ecstasy again.

"A failure!"—all who heard my work  
    foretold  
But wrongly pitied the musician's pain,  
I may not make the vision live again,  
But it was mine a vision to behold!

## THE LOVERS

**O**NE waited, Age, the lover;  
Till Alice could be won,  
His hour would time discover,  
The hour when youth was done;  
O fragrant, warm and tender,  
Rose lips and hair of gold!  
To Age must all surrender,  
And Age will clasp and hold.

But waited lover stronger,  
And over bold and free:  
"My love shall guard you longer  
Than all eternity!"

**He spoke to Alice slowly,  
He kissed away her breath,  
She turned from Age, unholy,  
And fled away with Death.**

## THE WHITE ROSE

**T**HEY brought to the feast,—for the  
bright

Red roses had faded too soon—  
This flower from a garden of night,  
Whose petals are pale as the moon.

O flower for the beautiful dead!  
White rose of the silvery streams!  
Your perfume around us is spread,  
An incense to mystical dreams.

O blossom of earth at its best!  
O beauty no ages can tire!  
You are hope's ineffectual quest,  
You are music's unuttered desire.

## ONE AND ALL

**I** AM one with the blade of grass and the  
giant tree,  
The birds and the flowers and roots are a  
part of me.

In vain, within this my self, have I sought  
my soul,  
It is absent, yet here, mere point in a  
mighty whole.

The beasts, in their strange and sluggishly  
worn disguise,  
Pass by—and I see my soul is within their  
eyes.

For the wisest of men is one with the  
grassy clod,  
All life is but one, the unity—Thou, O  
God!

## DELILAH

**N**O enemy am I who lies in wait,  
Nor threatened peril, nor remorse-  
less cheat,  
My love is all I lay before your feet,  
And humbly wait, a suppliant, near your  
gate.

What fancies vex your soul! You think  
me here  
Capricious as the changing clouds  
above,  
A Queen of Carnival, to fling my love,  
Confetti-like, to whoso ventures near.

You think, a brazen conqueror, I scheme  
To work your ruin, overthrow your  
throne,  
Disturb the kingdom where you reign  
alone,—  
Ah no! I only bring a better dream!

Angry and doubting still you waste the  
hours  
And search the mystery that 's all too  
plain.  
O that my love might fall on you like  
rain,  
Like shafts of moonlight or like summer  
flowers!

I would announce you joy, and bring  
release  
To all that lies in bondage unto pride,

Delight's winged thoughts should ever  
near you bide  
And faith and self-surrender teach you  
peace.

## SLEEP, THE BETRAYER

**A**LL filled with thee the conscious days,  
The world shows barren claims,  
Now work and power and shame and  
praise  
Are idle, echoing names!

For nought my passion can efface,  
My fealty can move;  
My heaven is but thy dwelling place,  
My universe—thy love!

Alas! that darker hours return,  
That rest asserts her reign!  
And instinct all of will must spurn  
When slumber comes again!

I, who am filled with thought of thee,  
Like cup with brimming wine,  
To cool oblivion's mystery  
Must soul and sense resign.

For when the midnight shades are deep,  
E'en love must learn, it seems,  
The infidelity of sleep,  
The treachery of dreams.

## THE WILD BIRDS

**S**TRONG-WINGED, they came from  
the South

To our sheltered orchard-green,  
Wild-eyed, with a passionate song,  
And their like we ne'er had seen.

"Hail! hail!" we cried to the twain,  
"We shall love you like our own,  
Sing long in orchard and close!"—  
But the strange wild birds had flown!

## A FRAGMENT

**S**OME who love have known a yesterday,  
day,

For some a morrow smiles,  
For us this arid little meeting way,  
Between ten thousand miles.

For us no tender memories to pain,  
No hopes to half rejoice,  
Farewell!—you will not see my face  
again,  
I may not hear your voice.

## THE SECRET

**I** LOOKED on the liar with hate,  
On the wanton with scorn.

"Not so," said a voice in my soul,  
And compassion was born.

Then I looked on my sister with love,  
On my brother with peace;  
From the evil of earth and its taint,  
My desire found release.

## SONG

**I**F Love comes laughing down our way  
We'll greet him gay as he,  
Detain him just an April's day,  
Then lightly set him free.  
His time shall be a time of Spring,  
Of showers and singing birds,  
For only laughter Love shall bring  
And only idle words.

If Love comes late, in wrath and pain,  
To teach us only tears,  
To claim a share in all our gain,  
A part in all our years,

To turn our sweet to bitterness,  
To crucify our peace,  
Still Love our master we 'll confess,  
Nor sigh for slave's release.

But what, my heart, if Love comes  
masked,  
To pass us in the crowd,  
Unknown, and with his boon unasked,  
His message unavowed?  
How drag the cross of love forborn,  
Through all the years of age,  
Till life is but a thing outworn,  
A fruitless pilgrimage?

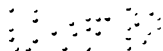
## THE SECOND SELF

**G**REAT silence, darkness, mystery  
and fear

On this the other side of living breath,  
I cry aloud, but none may answer here;  
At last I know the solitude of death.

But, after long, comes one, akin yet free  
In ways unfathomed yet by new-born  
sense,  
Well worth the dying—this new joy  
intense,—

A soul that finds in mine no mystery!



No words, for this is still a stranger land;  
Yet one may question, mutely,—one  
reply:

“Who were we then, before we came to  
die?

What lives have passed that thus we  
understand?”

“Once, once you lightly leaned, with  
laughing eyes,

From Venice balcony, in long fled  
years.

Beside you one who knew not time  
nor tears,

Her little face was beautiful and wise.

“Below a gondolier there chanced to be,  
Poor, squalid, ignorant, with lonely  
heart,

**You thought: 'That man and I are far  
apart  
As earth and sun!'—How strange is  
destiny! "**

## FRIENDS

**S**INCE friendship's so divinely sweet  
What need of love have we?  
If friends can know such joy complete,  
What better thing may be?

So if a doubt to-morrow hides,  
And danger comes our way,  
If nothing good for long abides,—  
At least we're friends to-day!

## THE DREAM OF THE EMERALD

**T**HE diamond dreams of glacier heights  
And white moonbeams on frosty  
nights;

The opal dreams of sunrise mists,  
Of purple shadows the amethyst;  
The ruby dreams of the Holy Grail,  
The pearl of lilies, pure and pale,  
The sapphire of tropic seas that gleam  
Profoundly blue,—and the emerald's  
dream?—

It lies even farther than fancy goes,  
The dream of the emerald no one knows.

## THE OLD AGE OF GERALDINE

**N**OW days of love are over,  
Now dreaming days are done,  
Here waits no other lover  
Save Death, the silent one.  
Now beauty's overtaken  
And age usurps the days,  
Here love leaves life forsaken,  
Here 's parting of the ways!

From out my glass, in sadness,  
A ghost looks now at me;  
Its smile is rout and madness,  
Its eyes fatuity.

It views me still, undaunted,  
Where fairer shade I 've seen;—  
A face that love once haunted,  
The face of Geraldine.

## THE BOND

**T**ogether,  
Night and day,  
The same house,  
The same roof,  
Kissed, enfolded,  
Eyes in eyes,—  
O my love,  
I thought it was You,  
But it was a Stranger!

## TERESA

**A**S, walking through a country lane,  
Teresa leaves a scrap of lace,  
Thorn-captured, ever to remain  
Of passing loveliness a trace,

So in each place where she may dwell,  
A month, a week or but a day,  
She leaves a bit of self, to tell  
Its story when she 's far away.

## INSPIRATION

**W**AS there no single word you wished  
to say,  
O silent vanished dead,  
Ere yet away you fled?  
Some word unspoken on that strange  
last day,  
And now fore'er unsaid?

I sit alone amid the silent night,  
With useless, idle pen.  
O wise beyond our ken!  
For you I wait, O soul that's taken flight  
Beyond the world of men!

**My mind is yours, some purpose to fulfil,  
And yours my ready hand;  
I may not understand,  
But all my body waits your spirit will,  
I write while you command.**

## UNWRITTEN

**H**ARK, how the rain is falling!  
And I alone in the night,  
Alone with the haunting voices,  
With the songs I ne'er shall write.

Alone with the pain and fever,  
With shadow clouding my eyes,  
And the thought that in early morning  
My parting soul shall rise.

Alas, for my songs unfinished!  
Now none will know of my songs;  
For words is my soul too weary,  
To death my body belongs.

Once I was young, unthinking,  
But songs were hid in my heart;  
Careless I let them lie there  
In secret place apart.

Sorrow, I thought, would show me  
For my songs the sweetest of keys;  
Passion and pain instruct me  
In heavenly harmonies.

But grief was a friend of silence;  
The skies were black overhead,  
My singing was all forgotten,  
I thought that joy was dead.

Ah no!—it was only sleeping,  
And woke with love's first kiss;  
I cried in a sudden rapture,  
"Can songs be sweet as this!"

And life and its bliss and meaning  
Were all in a single word,  
Though still, in my heart's dim chamber,  
The stir of song I heard.

And here to the end I 'm hasting;  
Outside is the driving rain,  
Within the warm, close darkness,  
The sharp surprise of pain.

I shall die when the dawn creeps faintly  
Across the window bars,  
To find a voice, it may be,  
Somewhere beyond the stars.

## SONG OF A LOVER

**T**HROUGH distance and sorrow,  
Through doubt and despair,  
Through dread of to-morrow  
And yesterday's care,  
With danger around it,  
With doubt and alarms,  
At last you have found it!—  
The way to my arms.

The past is a vision,  
The future a night,  
But to-day is elysian,  
All fear and delight.

No longer o'erweening  
The pride that would save,  
For in love is all meaning—  
'T is our birth and our grave!

## METROA

**M**ETROA came from off the mountain top

And morning smote him—though the calm of night

Still lingered in his vague and dreaming eyes.

Between the interlacing boughs of trees

The clouds swept soft across the azure sky,

The fields were patterned with a thousand flowers,

And, as it glinted past, a scarlet bird

Conspired to weave the tapestry of morn.

So, ever downward, through the crystal  
air

Metroa took the slender path toward  
home.

But when he came within the market-  
square,

And saw the well-known faces all around,  
Outburst his message from the mountain-  
tops;

He felt again the glory of the night;  
Once more he lived the rapture of the  
dawn;

No man was he, but creature of the heights  
By visions nurtured and by dreams con-  
ceived;

His soul, set free, would witness of its  
own,

His mind, new-taught, reveal a mystery.  
But while he talked the noise of trade  
went on,

The laughter and the gossip never ceased,  
'Mid strife and rush his words unheeded  
fell;

The neighbours signed each other as they  
passed,  
And smiled, half-mocking, half-indulgent,  
too,—

“Poor mad Metroa”—so he heard them  
say—

“Has passed the night upon the moun-  
tain-tops.”

### THE TREE OF DREAMS

**T**HE tree of dreams, in colour like the  
sky,

Once seen is ne'er forgot.

It grows where desert plains unsheltered  
lie,

And travellers know it not.

At dawn in silver, shrouding haze 't is  
dressed,

And when the day declines,

One bird alone may seek its azure rest,

One star upon it shines.

**It comes to jaded eyes in vision rare,  
Blue, blue as inland sea,  
In unknown lands, ineffable and fair,  
There stands the shining tree!**

## TRANSITION

**T**HE steel-grey pond is ringed with  
purple iris,

The lilac blooms against a misty sky,  
All haze and perfume, green and mauve  
and silver,

The end of May, ethereal, passes by.

Now cease the days of tender indecision;  
The crimson rose shall know its hour of  
birth,

And golden suns unveil a wilder rapture:  
Comes June, my love, to us and all the  
earth.

## THE QUEST

**H**OW shall we find our own?  
In what far places,

With what strange faces,  
Strange—yet familiar grown?

How shall we find our own?  
Of friends and brothers,  
Comrades and others,  
Not one has our spirit known.

How shall we find our own?  
At last, despairing,  
In death uncaring,  
We die, as we lived, alone.  
None have we called our own!











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